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Iconic Property Added to Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge

Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds and
over 700 private donations combine to complete Timber Point purchase

BIDDEFORD, MAINE: The 98-acre Timber Point property along the coast in Biddeford, Maine was conveyed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today as part of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, The Trust for Public Land and the Service announced.

Protecting Timber Point had been a top priority of Maine's Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge for decades. Located in Biddeford, Timber Point sits in the heart of the Gulf of Maine watershed, where the Little River meets the Atlantic Ocean. Its 98 acres are mostly undisturbed habitat, in stark contrast with the oceanfront of houses that stretch in both directions for over fifty miles along Maine's southern coast.

A single family has owned the property for more than 80 years, living upon it lightly until circumstances made it necessary for them to sell the land. The Ewings approached the conservation community first, and The Trust for Public Land joined several partners to forever protect Timber Point. It is believed to be one of the last undeveloped coastal parcels under single ownership between Kittery and Cape Elizabeth. The family will retain 13 acres and an existing farmhouse.

"Adding Timber Point to Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge is a dream come true, for the refuge, coastal conservation, and people who want to connect with this incredible landscape," said Wolfe Tone, Maine state director for The Trust for Public Land. "Timber Point is classically Maine, with rocky oceanfront, a sheltered, sandy cove, and diverse habitat. We are very grateful to all our partners, the Ewing Family, the Kennebunkport Conservation Trust, The Friends of Rachel Carson NWR, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maine's Congressional delegation, and of course, our inspiring private donors."

A public fundraising campaign to raise \$2.125 million of the \$5.125 million purchase price came to a close on September 30, with the final gifts coming through at the last hours. The project received from more than 700 individual donations and a grant of \$200,000 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The initial \$3 million that spurred these private donations came from the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), with the strong support of U.S. Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins and U.S. Representative Chellie Pingree. LWCF uses revenues generated from offshore oil and gas drilling leases, rather than taxpayer dollars, to

acquire important lands for the public. The project was also a Fish and Wildlife Service priority for LWCF funds in 2009.

Senator Snowe said, "The Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge is a tremendous resource to the State of Maine not only as a critical wetland habitat for migratory birds and endangered species, but is a tremendous draw for tourists and an engine for the local economy. The acquisition of Timber Point will bolster the draw of Rachel Carson and ensure that this will be retained for future generations to come."

Senator Collins said, "I am delighted that the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge now has the opportunity to acquire, at below cost to the federal government, this longstanding priority property. This will not only help ensure public access to Maine's coastline in a highly developed part of our state, but also protect nationally significant estuarine and marine resources, and preserve habitat protection for migratory waterfowl and seabirds."

"We are lucky to live in a state with some of the most beautiful natural resources in the country--especially our coastline," said Representative Pingree. "But as development puts pressure on these areas, it's getting harder and harder for Mainers and the millions who visit our state every year to access them. As one of the largest parcels of undeveloped coastline in Southern Maine, Timber Point will make an incredible addition to Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge. It will ensure that everyone, not just those who can afford shoreline property, will be able to enjoy and experience one of the most beautiful places in the state. That access is incredibly important for our communities, economy, and way of life."

The Kennebunkport Conservation Trust assisted TPL with the private fundraising campaign.

"We are delighted that this coalition of partners could complete such an ambitious project so successfully," Tom Bradbury, Kennebunkport Conservation Trust. "Timber Point will have long term benefits to residents and visitors to this part of Maine."

"In my 23 years with the Friends, the Timber Point acquisition has been the most exciting one for the Refuge. It is a spectacular point of land, where the fresh water meets the sea," said Bill Durkin, The Friends of Rachel Carson NWR. "This is a classic story for conservation, utilizing LWCF monies and private donor contributions. We need to keep the pressure on Congress to support full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund at \$900 million, an integral part of the Timber Point Purchase equation. Yahoo!"

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will manage the property for habitat purposes. The property is also well suited for limited, low impact, non-motorized public access. The refuge will make the property available for bird watching and wildlife observation as well as walking the rocky shores and an internal trail system.

"Timber Point is such a wonderful tract. The Ewing's excellent stewardship means the rocky shore, fringing salt marshes, white pine stands, mixed deciduous forest, cattail marshes and shrubby wetlands still provide the coastal habitat that are lost in so many places in southern Maine," Ward Feurt, Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge manager. "Rachel Carson

National Wildlife Refuge is fortunate to be able to manage this wildlife resource. The Trust for Public Land, Kennebunkport Conservation Trust, Friends of Rachel Carson NWR, and Maine Coast Heritage Trust made this acquisition possible. The public-private partnership to acquire the property was amazingly successful despite very hard economic conditions. The process was fascinating and the result, permanent protection of the peninsula and island, brings joy to us at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and to all the conservation partners.”

The property's 2.5 miles of coast is important for shorebirds’ undisturbed feeding and resting areas. Property habitats are home to breeding American woodcock, willow flycatcher, Eastern towhee, chestnut-sided warblers, gray catbirds and bobolink. Breeding scarlet tanagers, northern flicker, and Baltimore oriole use the forested areas.

With the addition of Timber Point, TPL’s Maine office has facilitated eleven strategic acquisitions for the refuge since 1998.

“We look forward to building an interpretative trail on the island this summer which will allow the public to watch and photograph wildlife and enjoy this great resource,” added Feurt. “The property will be open to deer hunting under state regulations. Future plans include water access for car-top kayak and canoe launching.”

Added Durkin, “Prior to the final purchase, I came upon a Rachel Carson passage from “Under The Sea-wind” (1941): ‘The island lay in shadows only a little deeper than those that were swiftly stealing across the sound from the east. On its western shore the wet sand of the narrow beach caught the same reflection of palely gleaming sky that laid a bright path across the water from island beach to horizon. Both water and sand were the color of steel overlaid with the sheen of silver, so that it was hard to say where water ended and land began.’”

The Trust for Public Land, established in 1972, specializes in conservation real estate, applying its expertise in negotiations, public finance, and law to protect land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and natural areas. TPL depends on the support of individuals, foundations, and corporations. In Maine, TPL has protected more than 125,000 acres. Visit tpl.org/Maine.

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